



# Haz Mat Release

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE  
LOS ANGELES COUNTY FIRE DEPARTMENT  
HEALTH HAZARDOUS MATERIALS DIVISION



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County of Los Angeles  
Fire Department

Prevention Bureau

Health Hazardous  
Materials Division (HHMD)

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## Illegal Toxic Discharge Nearly Kills Worker

By Paul Biren

On March 26, 2003, HHMD Investigators Paul Biren and James McCarron responded to an incident involving the discharge of furniture stripping solution containing methylene chloride to the city sewer in Santa Monica. The discharge of methylene chloride nearly resulted in the death of a sewer maintenance employee who was working in the sewer. The worker suffered third degree burns over 60 percent of his body from exposure to the methylene chloride.

When Biren and McCarron arrived on scene, HHMD emergency response personnel Alphonso Berumen and Irwin Biederman informed the investigators that the victim, Vincente Valenzuela, an employee of a sewer contractor, had been repairing a portion of the sewer when a pungent liquid began flowing into the sewer from a tie-in line. The man was overcome by chemical vapors and found himself trapped between his equipment and the flowing discharge of the coffee-colored chemical sludge. His only escape was to crawl through the showering chemical discharge toward the nearest manhole. As a result, he was drenched in the furniture stripping sludge. He then collapsed in the sewer. When his co-workers pulled him from the manhole, Valenzuela was unconscious and was in full cardiac arrest. Fortunately, he was resuscitated by paramedics at the scene and rushed to University of California Los Angeles Medical Center.

Prior to the arrival of Biren and McCarron, representatives from the City of Santa Monica Sanitation Department had already canvassed the businesses on the block and located a furniture stripping business called Stripper Herk that was located 20 feet south of the main sewer line. Inspector Gary Welling of the City of Santa Monica told Biren that he had observed an open sewer line inside Stripper Herk and that the company is using concentrated methylene chloride to strip furniture. Welling told Biren that in 1992 the City issued an order to Stripper Herk to discontinue disposing of chlorinated solvents into the sewer. Subsequently, the company filed documents with the City stating that they were a "zero discharge" facility.

Biren and McCarron knew that it was necessary to collect the evidence immediately before the methylene chloride evaporated or was diluted by effluent from the neighboring businesses. Biren and McCarron began by obtaining samples from inside the sewer. The

*See Toxic Discharge, page 2*



City of Santa Monica workers evaluate the sewer after injured worker is removed.

samples were taken upstream and downstream from where the victim collapsed. The Investigators also seized and bagged the victim's clothes as evidence. They then obtained consent from the owner of Stripper Herk to conduct an inspection and to collect samples from the floor and sump.

When Biren received the analysis from the Los Angeles County Sanitation Districts Laboratory the next day, the analysis confirmed the presence of methylene chloride in the sewer and on Valenzuela's clothes. The samples from the sewer were also an identical finger print match with the samples that were taken from the sump and floor at Stripper Herk.

The Investigators now had enough probable cause to request a search warrant for the business in order to obtain critical documents related to the illegal discharge. On April 10, 2003, the Investigations Unit in conjunction with the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) executed a search warrant at the Stripper Herk facility. In an interview with the FBI agent and Investigator Biren, the owner admitted removing the sewer cap six-months prior and washing his waste stripping solution down the sewer. The owner stated that he thought methylene chloride was very safe, because he had been dipping his hands in the tanks for ten years and claimed he had never been burned.

The case was referred to the United States Attorney for prosecution. The owner of Stripper Herk was indicted on two



Sample of methylene chloride taken from sewer.

counts of discharging pollutants into a publicly owned sewer system. If the owner of Stripper Herk is convicted, he will be facing up to 70 months in federal prison, according to the prosecutor. He may also be facing civil liability charges on behalf of the victim.

Valezuela spent over a week at the Grossman Burn Center in Sherman Oaks where he underwent skin graft surgery for burns on his back, and was then released.



## Radioactive Diaper

By JoJo Comandante

**T**he job of the hazardous materials specialist is going to the dumps ... literally!

On March 2, 2004, a call came in to the Emergency Response Coordinator. The radioactive alarm at the Browning Ferris Industries transfer station went off as a truckload of garbage was being weighed. A HHMD Emergency Response Team



Mike Uyehara uses a radiation meter to assess a trash heap.

was immediately dispatched to the incident.

Emergency Responders Frank Cervantes, JoJo Comandante and Mike Uyehara arrived on scene and observed the truck in question already isolated by the site manager. The truck was then surveyed with a "pancake" radiation meter to confirm the site alarm's response to the truckload. Near the center of the truck driver's side, the reading on the pancake meter went up to 600 counts/minute, more than four times the background.

There was no choice but to dump the load to identify which item in the load of garbage triggered the alarm. The truck had collected its load from residential areas and two hospitals. The entire load was surveyed and luckily enough, the radioactive source was quickly identified. The responders had anticipated some sort of hospital vials or tubes; instead, they found an adult diaper filled with radioactive human feces!

Kathleen Kaufman from the Department of Health Services Radiation Management Section confirmed that hospital patients may be given some radioactive materials for diagnostic nuclear medicine studies. Examples are radioactive iodine, thallium or gallium. They are not therapeutic but help in determining the size and location of tumors and other growths. In some cases, they may be excreted by the body. Upon the advise from the Radiation Management Section, the radioactive "diaper" was kept at an isolated area and allowed to degrade. After five days, the diaper was no longer a radioactive hazard and was treated as regular waste.



## Bill's Corner

For the last several issues of the HHMD Newsletter, I've been discussing and reviewing some of the Department's core values as they relate to our personnel and operations. In this issue, I'd like to discuss the core value of *teamwork*, which for most staff implies a core value that is simplistically obvious. However, in our culture and in the development of our program, teamwork has not necessarily been a core value that we are oriented to live by.

First and foremost, as a concept, teamwork should be something we can all buy into. However, in certain organizations the very nature of the job does not subscribe to the promotion or validation of the teamwork concept. New HHMD inspectors are off on their own performing inspections and doing work as individual inspectors, not as part of a "team" in the pure sense. Firefighters, on the other hand, are immediately involved in a team when they are assigned to a squad or an engine and work as a team when they respond to incidents or fires.

For teamwork to drive an organization there must be recognition of a common mission or goal. We must build teamwork by creating a work place that values collaboration. In this environment, employees firmly believe that thinking, planning, decisions and actions are better when done cooperatively. Management must subscribe to a team concept and clearly delineate the necessity for staff to work under this concept. Bottom line is that when we work together, we can produce outputs that are far superior to the work of individuals toiling alone.

In the HHMD we are, in fact, in both worlds. We subscribe to the notion that individuals must conduct inspections and move forward with enforcement or follow up activities. Staff cannot fully realize HHMD potential without working as a team with

other sections or Department staff. An inspector who finds a release might call out Emergency Operations staff. They might recognize that the release could be part of a criminal activity and call out Investigations to evaluate the incident for criminal prosecution. Perhaps a referral is necessary to the Site Mitigation or Cal-ARP units. We must rely on each other as part of the HHMD team, meeting the common mission of protecting public health and safety, and the environment.

We must also recognize that this Division, while unique in its role and responsibilities, is part of a larger fire department. Our services to the public cannot function without recognizing our need to be part of the team that consists of Operations, Prevention, Forestry and all the professionals teaming up with us from the Support Services, Information Management, Financial Management, and Materials Management Divisions.

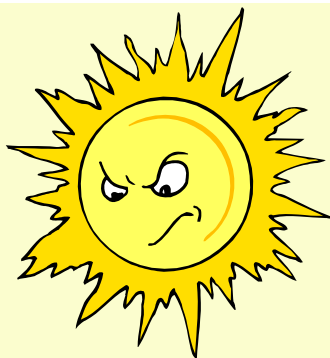
So while it is often a challenge in *our* culture to recognize that teamwork is inevitable to our operations, we must keep the "big picture" in mind when reviewing our goals and priorities. Without that recognition, we truly cannot realize the many benefits from teamwork. With that recognition, all staff at all levels become part of the team and start seeing the enhanced benefits. Although the HHMD was not born from the fire services, we are part of this Department and all serve the citizens of Los Angeles County. Teamwork is an extension of your mindset on how you see the operations of the HHMD being conducted. Start by developing the team mentality, then spread the value to others in your assigned areas. ♦



## Sun Valley Initiative

By Winston Perez

As a result of environmental concerns and community complaints, various regulatory agencies have formed a task force coordinated by the Los Angeles City Attorney's Office to implement the Sun Valley Initiative. This initiative addresses environmental problems posed by various industries, such as auto dismantlers, auto repair shops, gravel and mining operations, chrome platers, and the Bradley Landfill. The task force consists of inspectors from the State Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB), the South Coast Air Quality Management District, the Los Angeles City Fire Department, Department of Building and Safety, Street Use Inspection Division and the Los Angeles County Fire



waste. The violations carry penalties of up to one year in jail and/or \$5,000 in fines.

The California Department of Justice has recently acknowledged the task force as an official liaison to its Environmental Justice Unit due to the task force's dedication and commitment to protecting the community and the environment in the City of Los Angeles.

Department Health Haz Mat Division.

Since the beginning of this year, the City Attorney's Office has filed misdemeanor charges against 16 businesses for violating hazardous waste laws and regulations and conditions of their RWQCB permits. Criminal charges are also pending against two chrome plating businesses in Sun Valley for violations regarding storage and management of hazardous

## A Tragic Alcohol-Related Fatality

By Jim McCarron

**O**n April 26, 2003, HHMD Investigators Jim McCarron and Paul Biren responded to a plastics manufacturing facility in La Mirada, California. The response was based upon a reported fatality involving a 76-year-old man, the former owner of the facility and a pioneer in the plastic extrusion



Sparks from this power saw were the ignition source of ethanol vapors in the drum.

industry. The fatality occurred while he was cutting a supposedly empty 55-gallon metal drum that was to be used as a barbecue grill by his church's youth ministry. The investigation revealed that the

drum exploded due to flammable vapors inside of the drum being ignited by sparks created by the saw blade. The drum was launched like a missile with the welded bottom lid blown off and the still attached top lid becoming convex in shape. The top rim of the drum hit the man above the eyes and removed a portion of his head, killing him almost instantaneously.

The drum that exploded was one of three drums that had been purchased from a local drum recycler. The drums which had welded ends with bung holes, were supposed to be empty. The plastics company truck driver who picked them up identified them as feeling empty when he loaded and unloaded them from the truck. The investigators were able to pour out contents of the two remaining drums. Two other drums purchased from the same recycler were found adjacent to the explosion and contained eight and ten ounces, respectively, of flammable denatured alcohol.

The investigation uncovered a paper trail to the drum recycler. The Federal Bureau of Investigation was asked to assist the HHMD investigators in the execution of a search warrant at the drum recycler. A search of the business revealed that the drums had, in fact, been purchased from the recycler and contained residual amounts of ethanol. The drums had originally come from a well-known cosmetics manufacturer and had not been properly reconditioned, or even emptied, by the recycler prior to reselling them. Several other similar alcohol drums sampled at the drum recycler contained as much as two gallons of residual ethanol. Ethanol has a wide flammability range and forms an extremely explosive vapor/air mixture.

On the morning of the incident, Los Angeles County Sheriff's detectives conducted an investigation, prior to McCarron and Biren arriving on scene, and labeled the tragic explosion an accident. California Occupational Safety and Health Administration investigators determined that the deceased was not an employee of the company and therefore was not under their jurisdiction. The Los Angeles County District Attorney Investigators no longer respond to worker-related deaths. If not for the efforts of the HHMD Investigators, this case might not have been brought to trial.



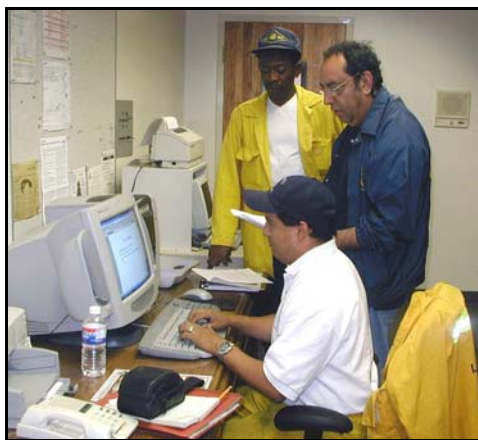
Drum showing the saw cut in the top which caused the explosion and fatality.

The information and evidence gathered during the investigation and search warrant led to the successful prosecution of the responsible parties by the United States Attorney. Millions of dollars in fines and penalties have been levied along with jail time for the defendants.

## Facing the Heat

By David Baltazar

**O**n October 26, 2003, an aggressive, threatening fire started in the mountains in Riverside County along the border of the County of Los Angeles. When the Grand Prix Fire crossed into the County of Los Angeles it was loose and wild, destroying many homes. Jerry Munoz, HHMD Manager, activated our Division's Damage Assessment



Fernando Florez, Bob Nasseri, and Sinuri Akib input data from field observations.

Teams. County Fire Station 62 acted as the Incident Command (IC) post. The first day, our team drove through the fire devastated areas, collecting information which would allow residents to know if they could go back to their homes or continue to stay in a shelter.

Four teams were deployed with digital cameras and global positioning satellite (GPS) units. Our first step was to assess Palmer Canyon, where 42 homes were destroyed and only four

(See Facing the Heat, page 5)

## Administrative Enforcement Order Penalty Box

By Deirdre Williams

- After several attempts to gain compliance, **K-1 Packaging** in the City of Industry was assessed an additional \$3,750 for failing to meet the terms of the signed consent order. The Division originally settled for \$5,644 of which \$4,000 was penalty and \$1,644 reimbursement costs. Payment of the additional penalty brought about compliance and closure of the case. *Case submitted by T. Provost*
- **Brico Metal Finishing** in Downey was fined \$6,000 plus agency costs for illegally disposing of its waste and treating hazardous waste on-site without a permit. The terms of the reached agreement included completion of California's Compliance School for hazardous waste generators. *Case submitted by T. Provost*
- Manuel Palacios's metal finishing shop, **Lectro Kote Metal Polishing** in Los Angeles was penalized \$1,300 plus the Division's costs for illegally disposing its waste. *Case submitted by T. Provost*
- **Graybill Metal Polishing** in Los Angeles was served with a \$50,000 enforcement order for various waste management and facility maintenance violations. After proving financial hardship, the Division accepted the business' \$10,000 offer and established a payment plan. In addition to paying the penalty, the business reorganized, cleaned, and implemented operational modifications to prevent reoccurrences of the cited violations. *Case submitted by M. Delgado*
- The Division reached a settlement agreement of \$12,261 of which \$10,000 is a penalty with **U Pick U Save Auto Dismantling** in Pomona. The business was cited for discharging oil to the ground throughout the property and failing to clean it up. *Case submitted by S. Chin.*
- **Dynamic Dye & Finishing**, a garment dying facility in Huntington Park, was penalized \$5,000 for illegal disposal of caustic soda on the ground and for having no contingency plan. *Case submitted by M. Whitehead.*
- **En Corn Frame and Wheel Alignment** in Inglewood reached a \$2,500 settlement with the Division for violating business plan requirements for 45 days after being notified and ordered to comply. The terms of the agreement included contracting with a consultant to develop the business plan and provide business plan and safety training to the employees. *Case submitted by D. Williams*



*(Facing the Heat continued from page 4)*

structures were left standing. Our main focus was to survey the sites and take digital pictures and GPS readings. In addition, we described the types of structures, size, and value of the property as well as the extent of any damage. We added the total value of the property given by the Assessor's office plus the values of cars, recreational vehicles and other items to the property loss totals. We had many challenges and obstacles in reaching some sites, due to fallen trees and debris from the structures involved in fire. A total of 64 homes were destroyed, 17 homes damaged and 17 vehicles destroyed or damaged. The total value lost was \$22 million.

The Incident Commander received the final report summarizing the Team's findings. This report is available in those districts that have a damage assessment kit. The Department is assisting our Division in providing equipment to enhance our damage assessment capabilities. Jerry Munoz has been working to facilitate ways to obtain equipment and promote the important role of doing damage assessment.

Helping those who suffer tragedy and destruction from a fire is a profound experience. In addition to providing damage assessment, HHMD staff was also able to assist many of the homeowners with the proper removal of hazardous materials

from their properties. Thanks to all of the participants from the HHMD that contributed to the fire support effort. They contributed a lot of time and dedication to doing quality work to make this project so successful. ♦



Rubble left behind by the Grand Prix fire.



## Operation "Blue Sky" Measures Capability in Terrorist Attacks

By Miguel Garcia

Earlier this year, a joint exercise was conducted to test the response capabilities of the emergency agencies within the County and nearby cities in the event of an act of terrorism. The exercise took place in Cerritos under the code name "Blue Sky." Several agencies were involved in planning the event to realistically gauge how agencies would respond to a terrorist incident. In addition to the HHMD, the following agencies took active roles: Specialized units of the Los Angeles County Sheriff Department, Los Angeles County Sheriff Bomb Squad, Los Angeles City Police Department Haz-Mat, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Los Angeles City and County Fire Haz-Mat squads, several first in engines companies from Los Angeles City and County, Los Angeles County Coroners, The National Guard 9<sup>th</sup> Civil Support Team, Los Angeles County Health Services, Terrorism Early Warning Group, and the Medical Alert Center.

The Planners of the event selected a large crowded concert theater filled with spectators as the target. In the middle of the concert's performance, a device went off, killing, injuring and exposing several spectators to an unknown chemical coming from somewhere in the building. First in fire and law enforcement agencies were dispatched to handle the situation. Upon arrival, the first in agencies found several victims displaying an array of unusual symptoms, many were seriously ill, with some of the victims becoming unconscious as they exited the building. The emergency response agencies quickly suspected an act of terrorism.

The first in responders were quickly overwhelmed with victims and called for additional resources. A command post was quickly established and the Incident Command System (ICS) implemented. The ICS is a structured system developed by agencies to handle a variety of tasks in a systematic approach. The fire agencies began to coordinate incoming resources, the care of victims, and the management of casualties. Units from LACoFD HHMD were dispatched, along with other specialized units. The incident realistically tested each agency's ability to perform their pre-established roles and responsibilities under stressful circumstances. As soon as resources started arriving, inter-agency coordination began to resolve the various problems that the incident was designed to test. The victims that were displaying symptoms were quickly and efficiently

decontaminated and tested with various instruments to determine if any trace contamination was present before transporting them to local hospitals. Many agencies shared manpower and resources in coordinating a variety of activities in the spirit of a common cause to resolve problems faced by the first responders.

At the same time as the first responders were dealing with the victims, other agencies were doing a careful but thorough search of the building using the latest technology and precautionary measures available to minimize injury to the first responders and any potential victims that might still be trapped in the building. A sprayer was identified and suspected to be the dispersal device for the simulation. There were clues left behind by the terrorists that were carefully collected and placed



Mario Benjamin and Annette Manning demonstrating the transfer of information during the terrorism drill.

into evidence. Law enforcement later apprehended two of the terrorists from the clues left behind. The ICS Post monitored the information collected by the various agencies and provided it to the public information officers which disseminated it to the news media.

The HHMD had 20 emergency responders assigned to several key positions during this exercise. These positions included technical support to the entry teams, two of the decontamination units, the law enforcement units, the coroner and to the responders assigned to monitor and sample the perimeter for possible escaping contaminants.

Overall, operation "Blue Sky" demonstrated that training is essential and proper pre-planning crucial during terrorist events in order to save lives, minimize delays and to bring rapid help to an incident that could have a potential for catastrophe.



### The HHMD Inspection Section has two new district offices:

Southwest  
24330 Narbonne Avenue  
Lomita, CA 90717  
(310) 534-6270

West  
6167 Bristol Parkway, Suite 220,  
Culver City, CA 90230  
(310) 348-1781

## The Wilmington Initiative

By Kenneth Smith

The Wilmington Initiative is part of the Los Angeles City Attorney's Environmental Justice Project. Since January 2003, the City Attorney's Office has coordinated multi-agency inspections of over 200 facilities. In addition to the Wilmington Initiative, the project has also launched the Sun Valley Initiative, MacArthur Park Initiative, and the citywide Chrome Platers Initiative. A combination of multi-agency inspections, criminal prosecution, civil litigation and community input is utilized to identify and take action against urban industrial pollution that plagues many disadvantaged neighborhoods in Los Angeles.

Participating agencies in the Environmental Justice and Compliance Team (EJECT) include HHMD, Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB), South Coast Air Quality Management District (SCAQMD), California Department of Fish and Game, Los Angeles City Departments of Sanitation, Fire, Building and Safety, Storm Water Protection, Street Use (Code Enforcement), and Port Police. EJECT resources are focused on industrial facilities located in high-risk neighborhoods, allowing for aggressive prosecution on multiple counts against a single violator.

The project began by addressing automotive industries. These included auto dismantlers, auto body shops, auto repair, auto salvage and truck repair businesses. These facilities are of interest to Building and Safety because of illegal structures and public safety concerns, as well as to the RWQCB because of the run-off of regulated substances into navigable waters.

The inspectors from the Southwest District formed a team consisting of Gerhard Trippel, the area inspector, and the designated sampler, B.J. Wright. Memo Hernandez participated as the liaison with the Investigation Unit, and as an additional sampler. Alternate members of this inspection team were Sinuri Akib and Eric Gonzalez. Initially, six cases were submitted to the City Attorney for prosecution for misdemeanor violations, including illegal disposal of hazardous waste, improper storage and management of hazardous waste containers, and lack of adequate contingency plans and employee training plans. Many of these cases have already been successfully settled with the responsible parties receiving probation.



Gerhard Trippel (far left) from the HHMD along with other Wilmington Initiative members discuss strategy during a pre-inspection meeting.

The Southwest District's involvement with EJECT has been a learning experience. We have experienced that the multimedia inspections do work. We have learned to successfully function with a large group, learning how our regulations fit or even overlap

in some areas. For example: Acetone, a solvent found in the fiberglass industry, is exempt from the SCAQMD rules and assumed by industry that they can apply it liberally inside and outside the spray booth. The SCAQMD inspector could not cite workers for cleaning their spray guns by spraying acetone onto the floor of a business. Hazardous Waste regulation prohibiting illegal disposal put an end to the practice for one business owner.

At the time this article was written, the Southwest District had approximately 34 Notices of Violation stemming from the Wilmington Initiative at the City Attorney's office pending final review.

### We are pleased to announce the addition of these staff members to our Data Operations Unit (from left to right):

Kimberly Walton, student worker  
Linda Trejo, intermediate typist clerk  
Eric Villanueva, student worker  
Ilene Morales, intermediate typist clerk  
Crystal Becerra, student worker





## HHMD Staff Goes International

By Karen Coddling

On June 11, 2004, four Hazardous Materials Specialists from the HHMD, as well as two individuals from the California Environmental Protection Agency Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) went to El Salvador in Central America. The mission was to train firefighters from El Salvador on how to respond to hazardous materials incidents. The training was organized between the National Association of Hispanic Firefighters (NAHF) and the Cuerpo de Bomberos de El Salvador (El Salvador Fire Department).

Approximately three years ago, the El Salvador consulate as well as the fire chief from El Salvador, approached Hazardous Materialist Specialist III, Memo Hernandez, to express their need for hazardous materials training.



Training team with members of the El Salvador Fire Department  
Kneeling (l to r) Fire Chief Abner Hurtado, Memo Hernandez, Javier Hinojosa, Robert Krug, Karen Coddling, David Baltazar, and Paul Biren.

This year's training was attended by David Baltazar, Paul Biren, Karen Coddling, and Memo Hernandez from HHMD, along with Javier Hinojosa and Robert Krug from DTSC. This year's training was more hands on, covering areas such as using the hazardous categorization kits and monitoring instruments, going through an extensive obstacle course in fully encapsulated protective suits, and responding to three mock scenarios involving ammonia, chlorine, and a toluene spill in a sewer.

Prior to these two training courses, the El Salvador Fire Department had no hazardous materials response capabilities. Now they have a dedicated hazardous materials response vehicle, an established incident command system, monitoring equipment, personal protective equipment, decontamination equipment, a reference library, designated hazardous materials firefighters throughout the country, and a resource team which includes a medical doctor and a chemist.

The instructors that participated in the training spent months in preparation, which included translating all of the training documents and presentations into Spanish. Also, the instructors spent their own vacation time and some of their own funds to make this training possible.

During the training, there was a lot of media coverage. The training was televised, featured in local newspapers and Hernandez was interviewed live on the most popular radio station in El Salvador. Phone calls were also made to the El Salvador Fire Department from private industry asking how to get the instructors to stay and conduct more training. Currently, an invitation from a representative from the International Resources Group (an organization which provides aid to El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Costa Rica) and fire departments from throughout Central and South America have extended their wishes to receive this training. ◆

So be ready, HHMD may be going to Costa Rica next!!!

Entry team assesses victims and uses monitoring instruments during simulated ammonia release.

Hernandez, originally from El Salvador, had already spoken to the Chamber of the Commerce from El Salvador with the same idea. The wheels quickly turned and in March of 2002, the first training of its kind was completed in Central America.

The training in March 2003, conducted by Javier Hinojosa, DTSC, David Baltazar, HHMD, Memo Hernandez, HHMD, and Geno Meras, NAHF, focused on lectures. Subjects covered were toxicology, personal protection equipment, instrumentation and decontamination, just to name a few.



## New Business Project and Government Facilities

By Mario Tresieras

The New Business Project (NBP) was created to identify and permit hazardous materials handlers and hazardous waste generators that were not previously identified within the HHMD regulatory umbrella. The NBP has utilized several strategies to identify handlers and generators, including: comparison of city business license and Environmental Protection Agency manifest lists with the HHMD database for hazardous waste generators; targeting large petroleum corporations to identify retail sites generating spent gasoline filters; and working with franchise owned markets and stores to identify hazardous materials handlers. As a result, the NBP has identified and permitted hundreds of new facilities throughout the County.

The NBP is facing a new challenge following the passage of Assembly Bill 1640. AB1640 requires cities, counties, and special districts to meet hazardous materials disclosure requirements. Government entities have long been granted "exempt" status for hazardous waste/materials permits and fees from the HHMD. As such, no concerted Countywide

effort has been made to identify and permit all government facilities.

We are currently in the process of obtaining LACoFD executive staff approval to permit government facilities. Letters have been sent to city managers and department heads requesting hazardous materials and/or hazardous waste facility information. To assist respondents, HHMD staff will be designated as liaisons between the HHMD and government entities. HHMD will provide compliance consultation and will also conduct several symposiums on regulatory requirements to answer any questions and assist with compliance. Routine inspections will not commence at this time but initial site consultations will be provided upon request to assist in compliance. The first symposium is scheduled for July 22, 2004, in Burbank.



## Envision Update

By Lance Ralston

Envision continues to grow and improve over time, thanks in no small measure from the valuable input received from staff. The latest addition to our growing community of users is the Emergency Operations Section (EOS). Planning has been in the works for several months, particularly with the help of Beverly Migues and Don Ellis. Joseph Chou was also instrumental in developing various user defined forms, fields, and reports for use by EOS. EOS staff was trained on Envision and began using the system at the beginning of this calendar year. We are currently meeting to improve and resolve some issues that inevitably arise whenever some new section or unit is incorporated into Envision. Some refresher training may be scheduled to address some data quality issues.



Previously, the Site Mitigation Unit (SMU) was trained and began using Envision for Site Mitigation cases. Current cases were incorporated into Envision and SMU staff began using Envision for case documentation and time and activity recording. Joseph Chou has developed some unit-specific fields in Envision and several reports for use by SMU.

Plans are underway to incorporate the last unit (Investigations) in Envision. That should occur over the course of next few months. The Information Management Division (IMD) is busy incorporating the Financial Management Division (FMD) into Envision. Billing and permit issuance will soon be done through Envision.

The Envision Workgroup, consisting of representatives from each section/unit using Envision, also met for the first time in many months. Several issues were discussed and should be resolved in the near future.

It has been a long journey, but the light can be seen at last glimmering in the distance. Thanks to all who have contributed to this effort.

## Jewelry Mart Compliance Team

By Mike Whitehead

The Los Angeles Department of Building and Safety reported that the Jewelry Mart Compliance Team (JMCT) multi-agency inspections were successful in accessing all jewelry district tenants. JMCT inspections enabled the HHMD to bring jewelry manufacturers into compliance by inspecting, permitting, issuing notices of violation, and also by providing fact sheets (available in English, Armenian, Korean, and Spanish). There are 2,902 tenants in the 53 downtown buildings. The occupancies were categorized as follows: 574 manufacturers, 476 retail/repair, 580 repair, 973 offices, 68 locked units, and 232 vacant units.

The following addresses lack engineering controls required by building and/or mechanical permits for jewelry manufacturing

(e.g., approved exhaust ventilation technology and safe electrical equipment) and will no longer have tenants involved in manufacturing: 220-232 W. 5<sup>th</sup> Street, 404-406 W. 7<sup>th</sup> Street, and 625 S. Hill Street.

As a result of the JMCT's efforts, jewelry manufacturing has been limited to designated buildings with adequate engineering controls. The benefit of this consolidation is the increased protection of public health and the environment.

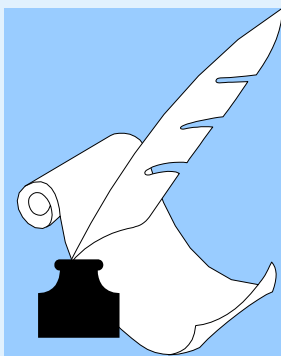
As of May 24, 2004, the HHMD has 461 jewelry manufacturing/repair businesses permitted in the downtown Los Angeles Jewelry District.



## Legislative Update

By Richard Gillaspay

**AB 826 Perchlorate Prevention Act (Jackson).** Signed and chaptered. This act amends Section 25404, to add Section 25504.1 to Chapter 6.5 of Division 20 of the Health and Safety Code, relating to hazardous waste. This law shall require a business that handles "any" amount of perchlorate to prepare and submit to the administering agency a business plan and inventory which shall address all perchlorate materials handled by that business. On or before July 1, 2004, this bill will require the owner or operator of a perchlorate facility located



within a five mile radius of a perchlorate contaminated public drinking water well to submit to the CalEPA a summary of any subsurface and any groundwater monitoring, investigation, or remediation work that has been performed at the facility.

### **AB 2969 Hazardous Waste Treatment: Silver (La Malfa).**

This proposed legislation exempts from the hazardous waste control laws, the encapsulation of silver from photo imaging solutions. It requires a person treating silver through encapsulation to ensure that the silver does not mitigate into groundwater or volatilize into the air.

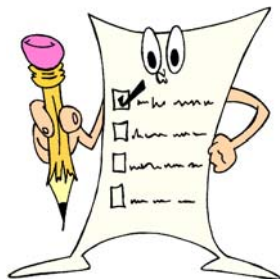
### **SB 1224 Hazardous Waste Violations: Air Districts (Ortiz).**

Requires an air pollution control district and air quality management district to provide notification to the local health officer and the director of environmental health of a county, city or district, and to the certified unified program agency of an illegal or potentially hazardous disposal of hazardous waste.

## CUPA Performance Evaluation

By Phil Kani

As some of you may know, the State on January 27 and 28 of this year audited the HHMD. Their audit team was comprised of representatives from the California Environmental Protection Agency, State Water Resources Control Board, Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC), Office of Emergency Services, and Office of the State Fire Marshal. They performed oversight inspections with one of our participating agencies (PAs) that has the underground storage tank program and with Inspector Richard Clark from the HHMD for the hazardous waste and tiered permit programs. We received 12 deficiencies (two were related to our PAs), 12 recommendations/observations, and 13 examples of out-



standing program implementation. Some of the deficiencies were paper related, like the policy for requesting program record information, while others expressed concern regarding the completion of risk determinations for all of our California Accidental Release Prevention (Cal-ARP) program sites.

They also made note of many examples of outstanding program implementation such as our comprehensive Outreach Programs, which include presentations to government and community groups, workshops for business groups, and exhibits and displays at community events. They also mentioned our detailed annual self-audit report, our use of the Administrative Enforcement Order as an enforcement tool, and the great improvement in our inspection report and notice of violation documentation and forms. Currently, the Administration Unit is following up on our initial responses.

Overall, the audit went very well thanks to the consolidated efforts of staff from our Administration, Inspection and Cal-ARP Sections.



## HHMD Retiree

By Phil Kani

As most of you know, Tom Klinger has pulled the plug, and will be surfing, riding his bike (motorcycle), and traveling with his wife Joya. Tom started in Environmental Management in 1969 as an Environmental Health Specialist (EHS). He worked in the South Bay area and worked and lived in the beach cities. Tom was promoted to an EHS III and worked as a District Senior, in the Solid Waste and Housing and Institutions programs.



It truly was a position that fit Tom perfectly. This position allowed Tom to read, perform research and write. Management, recognizing his knowledge and expertise in site mitigation, promoted him to a Hazardous Materials Specialist III (later to be re-classed to a supervisor item) over the Site Mitigation Unit. In 2002 Tom felt that he needed a challenge and transferred to the Emergency Operations Section. He quickly learned that he did need sleep at night, and after a year of sleepless nights transferred to the Cal-ARP program. In 2003, management recognized his talents and promoted him to his final position of Hazardous Materials Control Manager.

Those who worked with Tom knew he was dedicated to doing the right thing. That may be a buzzword that people use, but he didn't just say it, he lived it, even if he suffered personal negative consequences. As a supervisor, he protected and supported his staff. Additionally, for many years he represented us in union negotiations. I can say I was fortunate enough to work for him and consider him a friend.

Then in 1985, Tom changed directions and joined the Hazardous Materials Control Program. Management decided that Tom's true calling should be in the Site Mitigation Section.

"Tom has left the building." Like Elvis, we hope that there will be repeated sightings from time to time.



## HHMD Promotions

- Eric Bald, Hazardous Materials Specialist II
- Michael Bravo, Hazardous Materials Specialist II
- Gary Brougher, Supervising Hazardous Materials Specialist
- Fariba Khaledan, Hazardous Materials Specialist II
- Phil Kani, Supervising Hazardous Materials Specialist
- Milton Molina, Hazardous Materials Specialist II
- Victor Nanadiego, Supervising Hazardous Materials Specialist
- Magdalena Ordonez, Hazardous Materials Specialist II
- Jeovani Stoute, Hazardous Materials Specialist II
- Michael Whitehead, Hazardous Materials Specialist II



## HHMD Retiree

By Barbara Yu

Al Aguilar retired in March 2004 with over 33 years of County service. He started with the County of Los Angeles Public Health Program in 1970 as an Environmental Health Specialist (EHS) I and moved up the ranks to become a EHS III in 1995. During these years he worked in the Solid Waste Program, Preventive Health Program, Community Health Services, and Medical Support



Services, among others. He then changed items in 1989 to become a Hazardous Materials Specialist (HMS) I from an EHS III. Along with others, Al came over to the Fire Department in June 1991. While in the Fire Department, Al worked in the Inspections and Emergency Operations Sections.

Al is a very confident person; he knew what his capabilities were and carried himself accordingly. While in EOS, he took on the tough job of procuring supplies for the Division and did a wonderful job at it. On a personal note, Al loved Las Vegas. He goes there quite often. At the time of his retirement, Al was making plans to move back to his hometown of El Paso, Texas. We all wish him the best in his retirement.

## HHMD Retiree

By Jerry Munoz

Saying goodbye to people you have worked with for years can be difficult and uncomfortable. You have to start by being promising, funny, emotional, or a combination of them all. If you are looking for a roast, you can find yourself becoming very mean or saying things that someone else might misinterpret. We can roast our coworkers and draw the laughs with the best of them. What then can we say about Big Jim Odling?



Jim Odling officially retired on March 29, 2004, after 30 years of dedicated service to the County of Los Angeles. His last assignment was Supervising Hazardous Materials Specialist in the Central Inspection District where he served for almost three years. Previous to this, he worked for 11 years in the Emergency Operations Section. His broad chemistry knowledge helped him succeed and gain excellent work experience in the emergency response field.

Jim is well known for his good sense of humor and his advocacy for environmental issues. Just last year, he attended two environmental regional conferences in Cuba. His hobbies include bird watching and kayaking. He loves to Hike in the San Gabriel Mountains with his dogs and enjoys traveling to remote places to go on nature hikes.

Congratulations Jim! We wish you a happy retirement.

## 6th Annual California Unified Program Conference

By Phil Kani

The 2004 Certified Unified Program Agency (CUPA) conference was held this year in Santa Clara during the first week of February. We were able to send 14 staff this year. The conference was organized so that you could either "specialize" in one category or move between various categories to fulfill your specific training needs. The various categories offered included hazardous materials, hazardous waste, tanks, risk management, administration, enforcement, and federal programs.

There were special highlights for several of

our staff attending the conference. HHMD Chief, Bill Jones, was recognized at the conference for his efforts and dedication over the years related to the "CUPA experience." Hazardous Materials Specialist II Deirdre William's expertise related to the Administrative Enforcement Order (AEO) process was acknowledged and she was asked to be a presenter. She presented a case study on one of our AEOs and, as expected, did a great job.

As a person new to CUPA, I learned a lot. Next year the conference will be in Los Angeles, so more staff members hopefully will be able to attend.



**Bill Jones**

Chief

Health Hazardous  
Materials Division

*Haz Mat Release* is an effort to foster an exchange of information. We welcome any questions or comments.

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The HHMD 131 page Compliance Guideline for Hazardous Waste and Materials is available for download by going to : [www.lacofd.org/Guidance\\_documents.htm](http://www.lacofd.org/Guidance_documents.htm)



The new look  
for HHMD staff

Navy blue fire  
retardant pants  
and jacket.